time for apprehending beggars at public places and mobilizing public opinion against giving alms. After apprehension beggars are produced at a special court presided over by a metropolitan magistrate and are sent to custodial institutions for beggars where various services are provided for weaning them away from beggary and making them self-reliant. During th years 2001-02 and 2002-03, 3776 beggars were apprehended out of which 1788 beggars were convicted. However, there is constant influx of beggars from other States making it difficult to completely remove them from public places.

Drug abusers in the country

2363. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there is an increase in the number of drug abusers in the country;

(b) what is the status of such drug abusers; and

(c) what elaborate steps have been taken by Government to stop drug abusers from spreading their ugly tentacles in rural parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) Various surveys and reports indicate an increasing trend of drug abuse amongst certain vulnerable sections of the society.

(b) and (c) While the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance is administering Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act (as amended in the year 2001) for effectively regulating the availability of illicit drugs in the country, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is implementing a Scheme entitled "Scheme for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse" wherein Non-Government Organisations are provided with financial support for awareness generation, counselling services, treatment and rehabilitation of such drugs abusers. In addition, NGOs are also being funded for deaddiction Campus for treatment of addicts in community settings, especially in rural areas. Around 450 programmes are being funded all over the country, including rural areas with an annual allocation of Rs. 25.50 crores for treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers.